DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 489 IR 017 776

TITLE Accreditation Standards for the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council.

INSTITUTION Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council, Washington, DC.

PUB DATE Jan 96

NOTE 17p.

PUB TYPE Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; *Accreditation (Institutions); *Accrediting Agencies; Administrator Qualifications; Admission (School); Advertising; *Distance Education; Educational Equipment; Educational Finance; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Enrollment; Instructional Materials; *Planning Commissions; Teacher Qualifications; Tuition

ABSTRACT

This document identifies accreditation standards for the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council. The first part discusses educational objectives, materials, and services; student services; student success and satisfaction; qualifications of principals, faculty, and staff; admission practices and enrollment agreements; advertising and promotional literature/control of recruitment personnel; financial responsibility; tuition policies, collection procedures, and refunds; the plant and equipment; and research and self-improvement. The second part outlines business standards and is divided into three sections: (1) school and course promotion, (2) student enrollment, and (3) tuition, cancellation, and collection. The Code of Ethics for Sales Representatives of Accredited Distance Education Institutions and a questionnaire for evaluating the standards are also included. (AEF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Sally R. Welch
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Accreditation Standards for the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council

ED 394 489

I. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

A. **Description of Objectives:** Educational objectives are clearly defined and simply stated. They indicate what the educational program can do for reasonably diligent students. The character, nature, quality, value, and source of the instruction and educational service are set forth in language understood by the types of students enrolled. If a course prepares for an occupation or field of occupations, the objectives clearly state the types of occupations for which preparation is given.

B. **Appropriate Objectives:** The objectives of the institution must be reasonably attainable and be of such a nature that they can be achieved through distance study. For non-credit courses, the learning objectives must, where appropriate to the nature and type of the course, be comparable to similar non-credit courses offered in traditional institutions. Appropriate objectives include the development of skills, the provision of job-related training, the imparting of information, the training in the application of knowledge, and the development of desirable habits and attitudes. Evaluation of the educational program is based on the announced course objectives and the success with which the objectives are fulfilled.

II. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

A. **Comprehensive Instructional Materials:** Instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive to achieve the announced objectives.

B. **Up-to-date Instructional Materials:** Instructional materials are accurate and reflect current knowledge and practice.

C. **Authorship:** Instructional materials are prepared by qualified persons competent in their fields. Materials, other than standard textbooks produced by recognized publishers, are prepared by distance study educators skilled in preparing materials for correspondence/distance education use.

D. **Reading Level:** The reading difficulty of the instructional materials is keyed to the reading competence of enrollees in the course.

E. **Study Instructions:** Suitable instructions on how to study the course clearly indicate to the students what to do and how to learn effectively.

IR017776

(II. Educational Materials, cont'd.)

F. **Organization of Instructional Materials:** The organization and presentation of the instructional materials are in accord with sound, psychological principles of learning.

G. **Teaching Devices:** Instructional programs make effective use of appropriate teaching devices and supplemental instructional aids.

H. **Illustrations:** Illustrations are used intelligently, and they have educational and/or inspirational value.

I. **Printing and Binding:** Instructional materials are legibly reproduced, well-manufactured, suitably bound, and attractive in layout and format.

III. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A. **Examination Services:** The submission of examinations which adequately cover the materials is required. Adequate evaluation, correction services, and necessary counseling by an instructor are provided for examinations.

B. **Resident Training:** Resident training should supplement the correspondence/distance education course whenever it is necessary to attain the stated educational objectives.

C. **Handling Student Inquiries:** Relevant inquiries from students are welcome and are answered promptly and satisfactorily with due regard for any legal and professional restrictions.

D. **Individual Differences:** Adequate provisions are made to meet the individual differences of students and to provide counseling and guidance as required to assist students to attain their educational goals.

E. **Handling Failures:** Students who fail to do satisfactory work are encouraged to continue until they either show inability to do satisfactory work or until they demonstrate satisfactory progress.

F. **Encouragement of Students:** A constructive program is followed to encourage students to start, continue, and finish the courses in which they have enrolled.

G. **Student Evaluation of Courses:** Reactions of students are sought as one basis for evaluating and improving instructional materials and services.

H. **Appropriate Technology:** The institution uses appropriate technology in the process of enhancing educational services.

IV. STUDENT SERVICES

A. **Grading of Examinations:** Minimum student services include prompt return of accurately graded examinations.

B. **Student Records and Materials:** Ample study materials should be provided at all times to students. Essential student records should be adequately maintained.

C. **Counseling and Employment Assistance:** Competent counseling should be available to students on request. If employment assistance and other services for alumni are offered, they should be as described.

V. STUDENT SUCCESS AND SATISFACTION

A. **Student Success and Learning Outcomes:** The institution can show that a high proportion of students are satisfied with the training and educational services provided.

B. **Progress Through the Course(s):** The institution can demonstrate that a satisfactory percentage of enrolled students start the course, continue their studies, and finish. A sample check of the students in the institution must indicate a reasonable achievement in, and completion of, their course and satisfaction with the services which the institution is rendering.

C. **Achievement of Learning Objectives and Benefits:** The institution has in place an ongoing procedure that can demonstrate that a satisfactory percentage of graduates: (1) have attained the learning objectives established for the course; and (2) have been successful in achieving the benefits established for the course.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS OF PRINCIPALS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

A. **Owners, Principals, and Executive Staff:** The institution's owners, principals, officers, and managers possess sound reputations and can show a record of integrity and ethical conduct in their business relations. The Chief Executive Officer and top school administrators possess appropriate backgrounds, qualifications, and experience for their positions and have demonstrated the ability to direct school operations successfully.

B. **Educational Director:** A qualified person serves as the educational director. The educational director has overall administrative responsibilities for the educational program and a policy-making voice in advertising, sales, and collections.

(VI. Qualifications of Principals, Faculty, and Staff, cont'd.)

C. **Department Heads:** In large institutions, department heads or other qualified persons are delegated educational, editorial, and research responsibilities within their subject fields.

D. **Instructors:** The institution has a sufficient number of qualified instructors to give individualized instructional service to each student.

VII. ADMISSION PRACTICES AND ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS

A. **Admission Practices:** The admissions practices of the institution fully conform to the provisions of DETC Business Standards II B.

B. **Enrollment Agreements (Contracts):** The written agreement and/or other written documents left with the student specify clearly the nature and scope of the course, the services and obligations to which the institution is committed, and the privileges and obligations, financial and otherwise, of the student. Any changes in tuition, procedures, or rates must be made applicable to all future enrollees. The institution must use a written enrollment agreement that conforms to the provisions of DETC Business Standards II A and II B.

VIII. ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE/CONTROL OF RECRUITMENT PERSONNEL

A. **Advertising and Promotion:** All advertising, promotional or recruitment activities of the institution fully conform to DETC Business Standards I A.

B. **Control of Recruitment Personnel:** The institution's policies and practices in the hiring, training, monitoring, and managing of all sales or recruiting personnel fully conform to DETC Business Standard II C.

IX. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A. **Financial Practices:** The institution shows, by complete, comparative financial statements covering its two most recent fiscal years, that it is financially responsible and that it can meet its financial obligations to provide service to its students.

B. **Demonstrated Operation:** First time applicant institutions can document continuous sound and ethical operations in all respects. Applicant institutions must document two consecutive years of sound and ethical operation as a bona fide distance education institution.

X. TUITION POLICIES, COLLECTION PROCEDURES, AND REFUNDS

A. Tuition Policies: Tuition policies are in keeping with the provisions of the DETC Business Standards Section III A.

B. Tuition Collection Procedures: Tuition collection practices and procedures are fair. They encourage the progress of students and seek to retain their good will. The right to protect its financial interests is inherent with any accredited institution. Its tuition collection practices are in keeping with sound and ethical business standards.

C. Tuition Refund Policies: The institution recognizes that there are legitimate reasons why enrolled students may not be able to complete their training with benefit to themselves. Accordingly, the school has a policy for equitable tuition adjustment in such cases. Records are maintained on tuition refunds and enrollment cancellations to provide a reference source for management analysis.

XI. PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

A. Plant and Equipment: The building, workspace, and equipment comply with local fire, building, health, and safety regulations and are adequately equipped to handle the educational program of the institution.

B. Record Protection: Educational records of all students are maintained in a safe, fireproof, and reasonably accessible place as long as they are likely to be needed. Other records are maintained in accordance with current educational, administrative, business, and legal practice.

XII. RESEARCH AND SELF-IMPROVEMENT

A. Research and Self-Improvement: An accredited institution shows evidence of progressiveness and of effort to improve operating efficiency and service. Sound research procedures and techniques are used to measure how effectively the announced course objectives are being met.

B. Revision Practices: Effective procedures are used to constantly improve materials and keep them current and up-to-date.

C. Professional Growth: Interest in improving the course of instruction and in the upgrading of personnel and faculty is demonstrated through membership in professional associations, review and application of research, and practical experience in the general field of education and the specific field of correspondence/distance education.

(XII. Research and Self-Improvement, cont'd.)

D. **Self-Study Program:** An accredited institution has an established program or plan reflecting a desire to improve its services to students and to provide for the growth of the institution and its staff and faculty.

DETC Business Standards

Business Standards are a part of the Accrediting Commission's overall standards for accredited institutions. The policies, procedures, practices, and activities of an accredited institution must be in compliance with these Standards. In reviewing an accredited school, the Examining Committee members will determine adherence to the Business Standards.

Newly accredited institutions must come into compliance with the Standards upon gaining accreditation. The Business Standards prescribe the minimum policies accredited schools must observe in all phases of school operations.

Institutions, including institution's seeking initial accreditation, must also conform to the provisions of applicable laws and regulations, and these governmental regulations take precedence if there is a variance with the Business Standards.

Business Standards

Section I: School and Course Promotion

A. Advertising and Promotional Literature
(Accreditation Standard VIII A)

1. Each advertisement or piece of promotional literature written or used by a school must be completely truthful and must not give any false, misleading, or exaggerated impression with respect to the school, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates.

2. All advertising and promotional literature used by a school must clearly indicate that training or education is being offered.

3. All advertising and promotional literature must include the full and correct name and location of the school and disclose the fact that home study training or education is given. In addition, the local address of a sales representative may be used. Advertisements that do not identify the school by name ("blind ads") cannot be used.

4. The school's address must appear in catalogs, enrollment agreements, promotional literature, and official DETC listings. For this purpose, a Post Office Box number will not be considered an address.

(continued)

5. Testimonials of endorsement, commendation, or recommendation may be used in school catalogs, advertisements, and promotional literature provided that they portray currently correct conditions or facts and provided that the writer's prior consent is obtained and no remuneration is made for either the consent or use of the endorsement. Such letters shall be kept on file and available for inspection.

6. To enroll students, a school will not use advertisements or promotional material which are classified, designated, or captioned "men and/or women wanted to train for . . . ," "help wanted," "employment," "business opportunities," or words or terms of similar import which represent directly or by implication that employment is being offered.

7. Schools using classified columns of newspapers or other publications to enroll students must use only those columns headed "education," "schools," or "instruction." "Help wanted," "employment," or "business opportunities" classifications may be used only to advertise for employees or sales representatives for the school.

8. The use of the following words is restricted or prohibited:

   a. The word "Free" shall not be used to describe any item or service regularly included as a part of the school's course or services.

   b. The word "Guarantee" shall not be used by a school for advertising or promotional purposes.

B. School and Course Recognition

1. The school may use the fact of accreditation in its advertising, promotional literature, or letterheads only in the following manner:

   a. Use of the official Accredited School Seal.

(continued)

b. Use of the statement, with or without the official seal:

Accredited Member Distance Education and Training Council
or
Accredited Member DETC

c. Use of the statement, with or without the official seal:

Accredited by the Accrediting Commission
of the
Distance Education and Training Council

d. If an institution elects to disclose its accredited status, it must make available, upon request, the name, address and telephone number of the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council [added 1/96].

2. Any statement referring to the U. S. Department of Education's recognition of the Accrediting Commission must read:

The Accrediting Commission
of the Distance Education and Training Council
is listed by the
U.S. Department of Education as a
nationally recognized accrediting agency.

The above statement may not be used in common media advertising.

3. Any statement referring to the CORPA recognition of the Accrediting Commission must read:

The Accrediting Commission
of the Distance Education and Training Council
is a recognized member of the
Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation

Section II: Student Enrollment

A. Enrollment Agreements (Contracts)
(Accreditation Standard VII B)

1. The school must use an enrollment agreement (contract) which clearly outlines the obligations of both the school and the student.

(continued)

2. A copy of the enrollment agreement must be furnished the student either by the school's sales representative or by the school itself in the case of enrollments not obtained by sales representatives. The enrollment agreement must be written in the same language (English, Spanish, French) as the language of the promotional presentation.

3. When an enrollment is obtained by a sales representative, a receipt for money collected must be left with the applicant.

4. The terms of the school's cancellation and settlement policy must be clearly disclosed in the enrollment agreement.

B. Admission Practices
(Accreditation Standard VII A)

1. In admitting students, the school must observe fully the rights of all applicants and commit no action that would be detrimental to any applicant's opportunity to enroll because of race, sex, color, creed, or national origin.

2. The school must disclose to the applicant in writing the scope and nature of the course and its educational and/or training objectives.

3. The school must establish the qualifications which an applicant must possess to enable the successful assimilation of the educational materials furnished. The school must also determine with reasonable certainty, prior to the acceptance of the applicant, that the applicant has been informed of and has the proper qualifications to enroll in the course. The school must also determine that an applicant has no handicap, physical or otherwise, which could reasonably prevent the applicant's use of the knowledge or skills gained from the course.

4. No accredited school may enroll a person of compulsory school age until it establishes with responsible parties that pursuit of the course will not be detrimental to required schooling.

5. If a school enrolls a person not meeting the established qualifications for enrollment, a record must be made showing the reasons for acceptance of that person.

C. Recruiting, Training and Control of Sales Representatives
(Accreditation Standard VIII B)

1. The school has full responsibility for the actions, statements, and conduct of its sales representatives.

(continued)

2. In recruiting sales representatives the school must give factual and accurate information with respect to the nature of the job, the manner and method of remuneration, termination, and any other relevant facts.

3. Each sales representative must sign a written agreement at the time of engagement. The agreement must include but not necessarily be limited to the following:

   (a) the relationship and obligations existing between the sales representative and the school;

   (b) the requirement that the sales representative comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, and Accrediting Commission and Distance Education and Training Council standards or requirements, including a pledge of adherence to the "DETC Code of Ethics for Sales Representatives";

   (c) terms of exclusivity of engagement;

   (d) the manner of remuneration; and

   (e) termination rights, obligations, and procedures.

4. The school must assure that each sales representative working in a state is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of the state.

5. The school must train new sales representatives before they begin to enroll students. The training must include information concerning: the Distance Education and Training Council Code of Ethics, school courses, services, tuition, enrollment terms, and applicable policies; applicable local, state, and federal laws; and applicable Accrediting Commission and Distance Education and Training Council standards and requirements.

6. A sales representative must not use any title that indicates special qualifications for career guidance, counseling, or registration which are not in fact possessed.

7. Sales manuals or materials covering applicable procedures and sales presentation instructions and general sales policies must be supplied to each sales representative.

8. If a sales representative is authorized to prepare or place advertising or to use promotional materials, the school has full responsibility for the materials used and must approve any such materials prior to their use.

(continued)

9. During their periods of engagement, the school must maintain appropriate and current records on each individual sales representative.

Section III: Tuition, Cancellation, and Collection

A. Tuition Policies
(Accreditation Standards X A & B)

1. Tuition is defined as the total price of a course of instruction. Tuition includes all fees and separately itemized charges comprising the overall charge for a course of instruction, including fees and charges for the following:

   (a) Application, registration, matriculation, and down payment;

   (b) Texts, study guides, workbooks, and required reference materials;

   (c) Kits, tools, supplies, equipment, and audio visual devices and programs which are included as a regular part of a course or such items required to be purchased from the school;

   (d) The lease or rental of required equipment, tools, or other devices;

   (e) Instruction and educational service;

   (f) Placement and other services offered as a regular part of a course;

   (g) Required resident training;

   (h) Earned finance charges;

   (i) Optional resident training and sessions offered as a regular part of a course;

   (j) Required proctored examinations.

   The above definition of tuition must be used by accredited schools in preparing enrollment agreements, calculating refund amounts, and in cancelling and settling student accounts.

2. The total course price for any specific course offered by a school must be the same for all persons at any given time, whether sold by mail or through a sales representative, except for proper discounts to members of religious and government organizations, or to private organi-

(continued)

zations for quantity or group enrollments, and for bona fide special payment plans available to all students at the same time.

3. Terms of payment may be varied by the school from time to time and from person to person, so long as the price charged for the course at any given time and under any given payment plan remains the same for all persons.

4. Special price or discount offers must be bona fide and must state the specific date of termination.

5. Announcements of price increases must be bona fide and must state the effective date of the price increase, and the price increase must be applicable to all enrollees thereafter.

6. Scholarships or partial scholarships must be bona fide.

B. Cancellation, Settlement, and Collection
(Accreditation Standard X C)

Each school must have an established and published policy for the settlement of cases when students request discontinuance of training.

1. A student may request cancellation in whatever manner. Upon cancellation, all money due the student must be refunded within 30 days.

2. The following applies as a minimum policy for distance study courses without mandatory resident training:

   a. An enrollment may be cancelled by an applicant student within five (5) calendar days after midnight of the day on which the enrollment agreement is signed.

   b. From five (5) calendar days after midnight of the day on which the enrollment agreement is signed and until the time the school receives the first completed lesson assignment from the student, upon cancellation, the school is entitled to a registration fee of either $50 or 15 percent of the tuition, but in no case is the school entitled to a registration fee of more than $150.

   c. After the school receives the first completed lesson assignment and until the student completes half of the course, if the student requests cancellation, the school shall be entitled to the registration fee and a charge which shall not exceed the following:

(continued)

(1) Up to and including completion of the first 10 percent of the course, 10 percent of the tuition minus the amount of the registration fee.

(2) After completing more than 10 percent of the course and up to and including completion of 25 percent of the course, 25 percent of the tuition minus the amount of the registration fee.

(3) After completing more than 25 percent of the course and up to and including completion of 50 percent of the course, 50 percent of the tuition minus the amount of the registration fee.

d. If the student completes more than half of the course, the school shall be entitled to the full tuition.

The amount of the course completed shall be the completed lesson assignments received for service by the school as compared to the total lesson assignments in the course.

3. The following applies as a minimum policy for combination distance study/mandatory resident training courses.

a. For a course which includes mandatory resident training, the tuition price for the distance study portion and the tuition price for the resident portion must be separately stated on the enrollment agreement. The total of the two is the Total Course Price.

b. For cancellation and settlement for the distance study portion of the combination course Section III B, subsections 1 and 2 a through c above apply.

c. For the mandatory resident portion of the course, the following applies as a minimum policy: After the student attends the first resident class session, if the student requests cancellation, the school shall be entitled to a tuition charge which shall not exceed the following:

(1) Up to and including completion of the first 10 percent of the resident training, 10 percent of the tuition.

(2) After completing more than 10 percent of resident training and up to and including completion of 25 percent of the resident training, 25 percent of the tuition.

(3) After completing more than 25 percent of the resident training and up to and including completion of 50 percent of the resident training, 50 percent of the tuition.

(continued)

(4) If the student completes more than half of the resident training, the full tuition.

The amount of resident training completed shall be the number of days the student attends resident training as compared to the total days of the resident training program.

4. Courses which include optional resident training, seminars, or other resident training sessions are subject to Section III B, 1 and 2 a through c, above. Separate charges may not be made for optional resident training.

5. Upon cancellation, a student whose tuition is paid in full is entitled to receive all course materials, including kits and equipment.

6. In the case of student illness or accident, death in the family, or other circumstances beyond the control of the student, the student shall be entitled to special consideration and the school may settle the account for an amount which is a lesser charge to the student than that called for by the school's established policy.

7. Correspondence regarding cancellation and settlement between the student and the school, banks, collection agencies, lawyers, or any other third persons representing the school must clearly acknowledge the existence of the cancellation and settlement policy of the school.

8. If promissory notes or enrollment agreements are sold or discounted to third parties, the school must still comply with the minimum cancellation and settlement policy outlined in this section.

9. Collection procedures used by the school or third parties must reflect ethical business practices.

Revised January 1996

The Accrediting Commission has adopted the following *Code of Ethics:*

Code of Ethics
for Sales Representatives
of
Accredited Distance Education Institutions

As a sales representative of an accredited distance education school, I recognize that I have certain responsibilities toward students, the public, and my school. To fulfill these responsibilities, I pledge adherence to this Code of Ethics.

I will observe fully the standards, rules, policies, and guidelines established by my school, the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council, the State Education Agency, and other legally authorized agencies.

* * *

I will adhere to high ethical standards in the conduct of my work, and to the best of my ability, will:

1. Observe fully the rights of all applicants and commit no action that would be detrimental to any applicant's opportunity to enroll because of race, sex, color, creed, or national origin.

2. Never knowingly make any false or misleading representation to any applicant nor use any coercive practices in presenting information.

3. Enroll applicants only in the course or courses in which they have expressed their interest, provided they meet the qualifications and standards established by my school for enrollment.

4. Provide applicants only with information authorized by my school regarding the occupational opportunities for graduates.

5. State accurately and clearly to prospective students the approvals, accreditation, business and employer recognition, and course acceptance accorded to my school.

6. Never use tuition assistance available from a governmental agency or other source as the primary inducement for enrollment.

7. Refrain at all times from making any statement or inference that might falsely impugn the integrity or value of any other school, method of training, profession, or institution.

8. Discharge faithfully, and to the best of my ability, all of the duties and obligations and procedures established by my school for my position and know all of my obligations and rights as a school representative.

9. Reflect at all times the highest credit upon myself, my school, and the field of distance education and always strive to enhance the reputation of my profession through my conduct as a distance study school representative.